A KNOCK AT YOUR DOOR

W. E. SCHRAMM

The BOOK of

Rev. Andrew Wilch Jr. #

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PREFACE

The author of this volume has long felt the need of a booklet that will apprise the unchurched and unbelieving man and woman of the world of Jesus Christ's eagerness to enter the heart and life of sinners to redeem them from temporal and eternal death, which is the wage of sin, and to fulfill all that man needs, in view of sin, for salvation and eternal life. The Lord Christ stands without the door of the sinner's heart and knocks for admittance. Shall He knock in vain?

This volume is intended to call the casual reader's attention to the Lord Jesus as He stands without his heart knocking for admission and pleading for a surrendered life. The Savior Christ is both willing and able to help sinners yield their lives completely to His service. This book wants to make known that willingness and ability to help on Jesus' part. This is its fundamental motive. And once that purpose has been realized it is hoped sufficient interest will have been stimulated in the reader's soul to investigate further what the Bible has to teach on sin and its consequences and deliverance from sin by faith in the Savior's blood-bought atonement. Hence no attempt has been made to cover all the doctrines included in the Gospel plan of salvation. The author does not intend this book to be used as a handbook for the instruction of adults who are applicants for church membership, but rather that it may awaken a desire for further instruction in the heart of those who may perchance read it.

The care and appeal of temporal life make such a demand on the sixty million unchurched and unchristian Americans as to hinder them from giving much earnest

thought to Jesus and His Gospel. A friendly appeal, such as this book aims to publish, may be the very thing that will cause such inattentive souls to pause for a few moments and consider Christ's loving invitation. It is most generally careless inattention and the failure to put first things first that cause sixty million Americans to fail to admit Jesus to take full possession of their life. Among this number there are many who are not averse, when their attention is called, to devote an hour or two to investigating the "why" and the "how" of salvation. This book will have accomplished its purpose, if Christian workers, both pastors and laymen, can make it serve as an evangelistic appeal among such unchurched friends and neighbors. For this reason, the first chapter is also published in tract form under the title, *A Friend at Your Door*, because it deals especially with Jesus' invitation to enter the sinner's heart to redeem it and make it a temple unto God most holy. Therefore, may the reader who reads this message hold fast to the truth which it contains and pass it on to another, to whom it may also become a savor of life unto life eternal.

HENRY E. KOCH,
Secretary-Editor of the
Commission on Evangelization.

December 14, 1927.

CONTENTS

PAGE

CHAPTER I 11

The Lord Jesus Knocks

Who Knocks?

Why Does He Knock?

Pardon
Peace
Power

How Does He Knock?

When Will He Enter?

The Vital Question

CHAPTER II 23

The Bible, A Safe Guide

The Bible Is the Word of God

The Claim of Divine Authorship
The Attitude of Jesus to the Bible
Its Supernatural Message
Its Prophecies and Their Fulfillment
The Vicious Warfare Which It Has Withstood
Its Effect on Human Life

What Does the Bible Mean to You?

Neglected Bibles
Bible Difficulties
Bible Lovers are in Good Company
The Final Test

PAGE

CHAPTER III..... 37

Plain Directions for the Man Who Would be Saved

Respectable Sinners

Guilty

Sin's Penalty Is Death

Sin's Pardon Is Possible

Jesus, The Way to Pardon

The Proof

The Lawyer's Question

A Question for You

Salvation Is by Christ Through Faith

Repentance Required

Confession of Sins Necessary

If You Are Not Saved, Whose Fault Is It?

CHAPTER IV..... 51

What Think Ye of Christ?

The Judgment of Other Men

In Apostolic Days

Since Apostolic Days

What Is Your Verdict?

Supreme Issues Involved

A Life or Death Decision

Every Man May Know the Truth

As to His Birth

As to His Names

As to His Works

As to His Teachings

As to His Own Claims

A Definite Decision Called for

PAGE

CHAPTER V..... 65

Why Not Join the Church?

You Need the Church

God Has Established the Church
For Your Growth in Grace
For Christian Fellowship
For the Benefits of the Sacraments
When This Need Is Most Keenly Felt

The Church Needs You

Your Influence Is Needed
Your Service is Needed
Your Financial Support is Needed

Excuses Not Valid

I Can be a Good Christian Outside the Church
There are Hypocrites in the Church
I am Unfit for Membership in the Church

CHAPTER VI..... 79

Do It Now!

Get First Things First

There are Some Duties Which are More Important Than Others
Duties of First Importance Should Receive First Attention

God and His Kingdom are to Have First Place

Neglect of This Vital Duty Makes Life a Failure
Many Professed Christians Do Not Meet the Savior's Requirement

CHAPTER VI — *Continued*
The Urgent "Now"
It is Well to Remember That Only the Present is Ours
To Delay is to Trifle with God
Jesus Will Never Be Closer to You Than He is Today

THE LORD JESUS KNOCKS

THUS SAITH THE LORD:

Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. REV. 3, 20.

*And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. * * * And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.* JOHN 6, 35, 37.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! MATT. 23, 37.

The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. REV. 22, 17.

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. MATT. 11, 28.

A KNOCK AT YOUR DOOR

CHAPTER I

The Lord Jesus Kocks

The village doctor was a benevolent soul. When the report the hermit was ill reached his ears, he waited for no further summons. With medicine case and a basket of food suited to an invalid, he started. It was not possible to drive, so he went afoot, over the stony hill and down through the brambled ravine to the poor hut which the hermit called home. He rapped at the door but there was no response. He tried the door but it would not yield. It was evidently fastened on the inside. For some minutes he continued his efforts to gain admission but his endeavor was in vain. The door continued closed and, save for the echo of his own knocking, there was dead silence within. He was sincerely eager to give aid but the closed door stood in his way. There was nothing to be done but to take his case and basket and depart.

Inside the hut the hermit was peeping through the tattered window blind. He had heard the knocking and he had recognized the physician, but he had resolved not to open the door. He really needed a friend, for besides being sick he was quite poor and alone, yet he had refused to receive a man who had come to offer assistance and comfort and fellowship.

You say: "He was mad. His illness had made him delirious. No man in his normal state of mind would have acted in such a manner."

No, it was not insanity nor was it delirium. It was rather a foolish stubbornness, a foolish blindness, which led the hermit to repel the good man who stood knocking at his door.

Of course the man was quite inexcusable. Every right-thinking person will severely condemn such a boorish, ungrateful spirit. But in condemning this hermit, great hosts of others are brought under condemnation. There is a better friend than this village doctor. There is a more condescending love than that which he displayed. There are more blessed gifts than those which he bore in his medicine case and hamper. There are countless millions of men and women at whose heart's door this Best Friend has been sent away, taking with Him the priceless blessings which He earnestly desires to bestow.

Who Knocks?

Remember it is the exalted Son of God who says: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." When we think of this, is it not an amazing thing that the divine Christ should thus condescend to visit men? Is it not truly wonderful that the Lord Himself should stand at the door of my poor heart and there knock and wait for admission?

When, in the Sermon on the Mount, our Savior promised that if we knock it shall be opened to us, He conferred upon us a very high honor and a very gracious privilege. Who am I that I should have access at any hour of the day or night to the door of heaven's mercies? The Lord's invitation to us to knock at His door shows a marvellous degree of grace, but His coming to us to knock at our door is gracious beyond all comparison. When our blind ignorance and our sinful perversity keep

us from knocking at His door, His loving kindness brings Him with melting heart and loaded hands to knock at our door.

Dear reader, can you picture the divine Christ standing and knocking, patiently knocking, at the heart-door of a worldly sinner? If you can, you have a tender and pathetic revelation of the wooing, yearning love of Jesus.

Why Does He Knock?

When the Lord comes and knocks at a door He has a very definite purpose in view. He comes not to beg but to bless. He comes not to be ministered unto but to minister. He comes not empty-handed but laden with priceless treasures. He comes to bring pardon, peace and power.

Pardon. The man who has never admitted Christ into his heart and life may have many needs but chief among them is his need of pardon. Sin is worse than sickness; it is worse than poverty; it is worse than hunger. Sin is the worst thing in all the world. It is the one thing which can separate a man from God and heaven. Sin separates a man from God in life and in death. It separates a man forever from God in the world to come. Therefore pardon is sinful man's supreme need. Jesus Christ alone can and does meet this need. When He comes into the heart, sin goes out. He brings pardon.

Long years ago the Prophet Isaiah came to King Hezekiah with this message: "Set thy house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live." When the prophet bade the king set his house in order for death, he was not thinking of life insurance nor of making a will. No, he had in mind that preparation which fits man to meet his God. It is sin which has thrown every man's house

into disorder, and order is never restored until the sin is pardoned. Jesus alone is able to set a man's house in order. No one is prepared to meet God until he has opened his heart to the Heavenly Guest who stands at the door and knocks.

Peace. Pardon and peace come hand in hand. No man can have one without possessing the other. Accordingly, when Jesus brings pardon into a heart, He also brings peace. The peace of God is a precious boon. No life knows real happiness without it. But peace and sin cannot dwell together in a human heart. A sinful heart is a troubled heart. It has fears which human arguments fail to quiet. It has yearnings which neither money nor pleasure can satisfy. These hearts of ours were created for our Lord and they are restless until we abide in Him and He in us.

I was once invited by one of my parishioners to eat a meal at her home. My hostess had several boarders, one of whom, a young woman, was seated at the table with me. In the course of our conversation this young lady informed me that she had never made a profession of Christianity and that she never attended the services of any church. Many of the teachings of the Bible she regarded as unreasonable myths. But it was evident from her own statements that her heart was ill at ease. I therefore asked her whether her unbelief in God brought her any comfort when she thought of death.

"Oh," she replied, "I never permit my thoughts to dwell on death."

"But," I objected, "you cannot always escape the subject. Some of your friends die. Now and then an associate of your own age is taken away. Some of these young people go very suddenly. At times you yourself

become ill. Such happenings thrust thoughts of death upon you. If you think at all, you must face the subject."

The young woman merely smiled and said: "I have a way of getting rid of unpleasant thoughts. I go to a dance or to a lively show." But her smile died away as she continued: "If I were to permit myself to think much about such things as death, I would go crazy."

This was certainly a sorrowful confession. The girl virtually admitted that there was no peace in her heart, and yet when the Prince of Peace knocked at the door of her heart she hunted jazz music to drown the sound of His knocking.

He who stands at the door and knocks is the same Lord who has declared: "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Power. With this heavenly pardon and peace, Jesus also brings His power over sin when He enters the door of a human heart. As long as we are in this sinful world we have powerful foes to face. We have an adversary who as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. The man who tries to meet life's difficulties and fight life's battles in his own strength is sure to meet with disappointment and defeat. The Savior Himself warns us that without Him we can do nothing. Have you never resolved that you would do a certain thing which you regarded as right, and then when the time came you failed to do it? Have you never firmly promised yourself that you would not do something which you deemed harmful or wrong, and then under temptation you did the thing which you confidently said you would not do? Such experiences are common. They prove beyond controversy that our natural strength is not suffi-

cent for the daily temptations which beset us. We need that power from on high which Jesus is able and eager to give us. Without Him we are failures; with Him we are more than conquerors. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

I have a friend who in former years was addicted to drink. He knew that his dissipation was hurtful to his business. He realized that it disturbed the happiness of his home. He saw that it was setting a bad example for his sons and that it was seriously undermining his health. Repeatedly he resolved to give up his drinking and then after a short period of abstaining he would meet his old companions and begin again. Eventually after a prolonged spree he became alarmingly ill. His physician assured him that he would not survive another such experience. Unable to leave his bed for some days, he had time for earnest thought. "I have tried to break off this habit before," he reflected, "and I have always failed. Now I have reached the point where I must either quit drink or die. My former attempts have failed probably because I did not go about it in the right way. I relied on my own strength. That was a mistake. I have neglected the Lord and His Church, and therefore I have been weak. Now I intend to look to Jesus Christ for power and with His help I am determined to drink no more."

That was twenty years ago and my friend has been a sober man since that day. By the grace of God he opened the door of his heart, Jesus came in to him, and by His power he accomplished what he was never able to do by his own strength.

Jesus is mighty to save. When He comes into a human heart He comes with all His saving power. Through Him we have strength for life, we have a con-

fident hope in death and we have the certainty of eternal happiness in the world to come. Let me solemnly assure you, dear reader, that you cannot commit greater folly than to close your heart when the Savior stands knocking at your door.

"Admit Him, lest His anger burn,
And He, departing, ne'er return;
Admit Him, or the hour's at hand
You'll at His door rejected stand."

How Does He Knock?

And now it may be well to consider for a moment the manner in which this blessed Guest knocks for admission to our hearts. Perhaps it would not be incorrect to say that Jesus has two hands and that He knocks with both of them. He knocks with the hand of His Word and He knocks with the hand of His works. It would be hard to imagine a man or a woman dwelling in this Christian land, at whose door the Savior has not knocked with both hands. Can you, dear friend, number the times that the Lord has stood at the threshold of your heart and knocked?

Even though you may not have attended church services with any degree of regularity, you have certainly heard sermons which have aroused your conscience and compelled you to think about your relation to God. Every such sermon is the knock and voice of Jesus. Perhaps you have heard a funeral sermon which has pressed home to your soul the truth that it is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment. That was the knock and voice of Jesus.

If you have passed through a serious sickness, or if in some accident you have had a narrow escape from death,

you have doubtless heard the Master's knock. Or, it may be that the death of some dear friend has raised a series of questions in your mind. "If I should be taken suddenly as my friend has been, would I be ready to go? If there is a judgment after death, what have I, a sinner, to hope for?" Such questions are an indication that the Savior is knocking. Every conviction of conscience, every word and work of God which make you dissatisfied with your own life and cause you to yearn for something more acceptable to Him, especially every Gospel promise which invites you to embrace Jesus as your personal Savior and sways your heart to yield to Him, these are all the knockings of your Lord.

The mission of this book is to knock once more, in Jesus' name, at your door. It has no other aim or purpose. If the Lord will use it thus as His instrument, those who are responsible for its publication will be devoutly thankful for the privilege of sending it forth. Dear friend, if you have never admitted Christ to your heart and life, then, I beg of you, hear His knock and His voice as you read these pages. Remember that it is your Lord who pleads with you. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

To you who have opened your heart to the Lord, His knock is a plea for a more complete surrender of your life to Him. He is not satisfied with a divided heart nor with a wavering heart. The more fully you yield your life to Him, the more it will redound to His glory and to your own blessedness.

When Will He Enter?

We have yet to notice the terms on which the rich blessings of Christ are delivered to us. "If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him." Those conditions seem easy to understand and easy to meet. Jesus does not demand that a man shall first make himself moral, or bring a royal gift, or perform some heroic service. No, this is what He says: "Hear My voice and open the door."

This plainly implies that the door is closed, and so it is. The heart of the sinner is by nature closed against God. The Bible tells us that the carnal mind is enmity against God. We are also told that man by nature is dead in trespasses and sins. Therefore the sinner has no natural desire to open the door nor has he any power in himself to undo its fastenings and swing it ajar. Yet the conditions laid down here by our Savior plainly imply that the hinges on the heart's door swing outward and that it must be opened from the inside. These facts taken together would perplex and discourage us if we would fail to remember that the Lord Himself supplies all that the sinner lacks. His knock arouses the sinner and His voice kindles a desire for the treasures which He brings. Now the door is open and Jesus will come in. Here is the situation—Jesus knocks at the door of "any man" and will come in if the door is not kept closed. "Any man" has the power to keep it closed and to shut the Lord out. Against a man's will even the mighty Savior cannot and will not force an entrance into his heart.

The Vital Question

Permit me in all earnestness, my dear friend, to press home to your heart this question: Can you say with confidence that you have embraced Jesus as your personal Savior? If not, who is responsible for that condition? It is absolutely certain that the Lord is not to blame. The fault must be our own: He means exactly what He says when He promises: If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him.

On one occasion when Jesus contemplated the unbelief of the Jews, He uttered this pathetic lament: O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! That expression "ye would not" explains why those Jews did not accept His salvation and it explains why countless thousands are unsaved today. The fault lies with themselves. Christ *would* but they would *not.*

And now that this Heavenly Guest stands again at your door knocking, now that His wooing voice is again calling to you: "Open! Open unto Me!" what is your response? When the matter is so vitally important, why should you hesitate? There is no one who can save you but Jesus; there is no other way but His way. Even as I type these lines I am praying that you may have the grace to say:

"Come into my heart, Lord Jesus!
There is room in my heart for Thee!"

THE BIBLE, A SAFE GUIDE

THUS SAITH THE LORD:

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. 2 PETER 1, 19-21.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. 2 TIM. 3, 16, 17.

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. 1 THESS. 2, 13.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. PS. 119, 105.

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever. IS. 40, 8.

Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it. LUKE 11, 28.

CHAPTER II

The Bible, A Safe Guide

A certain man was discussing with his wife the proper pronunciation of the word "adult." The man insisted that the accent is on the first syllable, while his wife contended that the second syllable is accented. After a few moments of argument the wife suggested that they consult a dictionary and thus definitely settle the matter. To this proposal the husband objected, insisting: "I do not care what the dictionary says. The word should be pronounced 'a'-dult.' To accent the second syllable makes the word sound absurd, dictionary or no dictionary."

"In that case I have nothing more to say," was the wife's rejoinder. "To argue a matter of pronunciation with one who will not accept the authority of the dictionary is a waste of time and breath."

The wife was quite right, both in her pronunciation and in her logic. There is an authoritative standard by which matters of pronunciation and spelling are to be decided, just as we have tested scales to decide matters of weight, or a tape-line to determine distance. All such matters are settled, not by the whims or fancies of some individual, but by submitting them to the test of a recognized standard.

In like manner there is an absolute standard by which all matters pertaining to Christian doctrine and life are judged. I refer of course to the Bible. This Book Divine is not only our arbiter to decide matters in controversy, but it is the actual source of our doctrines and of the rules which govern our morals. To discuss any phase of the Christian religion with a man or woman who does

not recognize the authority of the Bible is almost without profit. First the Bible must be accepted as an absolutely reliable source of spiritual truth and then only can we hope to make progress in a discussion of spiritual matters.

It shall be the aim of this chapter to show that the Bible is a thoroughly safe guide, every statement of which may be accepted with implicit confidence. But, my dear reader, if your faith in the teachings of this Book of books is to be strengthened, it must be accomplished not by the force of my logic but by the power of God's Spirit. I shall endeavor to state the truth plainly, with the devout prayer that the Holy Spirit may work conviction in your soul.

The Bible is the Word of God

The Bible is a safe guide for the simple reason that it is the inspired Word of God. In giving us this Book God did indeed use human writers such as Moses, David, John and Paul, but He stood back of these men to direct them and inspire them. When we say that the Bible is an inspired Book, we mean that God so moved and led these holy men that they wrote what He wanted written in the words which He wanted employed. "But holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Peter 1, 21. Permit me to cite a few of the proofs that the Scriptures are the inspired revelation of the Lord.

The Claim of Divine Authorship. The Bible itself claims to be the Word of God. As we turn the pages of this wonderful Book, we find many admonitions and promises beginning thus: "Hear ye the word of the Lord," or "Thus saith the Lord God of hosts." The books of the prophets abound in expressions like this: "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying—" There are literally hundreds of such statements for which the claim of divine

origin is plainly made. Furthermore, in Paul's second letter to Timothy he declares that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God." A very similar declaration is made by the Apostle Peter when he writes: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, * * * for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." No one who has any knowledge at all of the Bible will deny the assertion that this Book repeatedly and positively claims to be the inspired message of the Lord.

Accordingly the Bible is either the infallible revelation of Jehovah or it is an untrustworthy book, full of frightful falsehoods. I say this deliberately and reverently. It is either the Book of God or it is an impious fraud. I have no sympathy at all for the modern skeptic who attempts to praise it as a good book while he denies that it is God's Book. If the Bible is not what it professes to be it is not a good book. But I know and I trust that you know, my dear reader, that it is not a deception and a cheat. If we know it to be a good book, we must confidently accept it as God's Book.

The Attitude of Jesus to the Bible. It is very evident that the Lord Jesus believed in the Scriptures as the inspired message of God. With the utmost confidence in their authority, He quotes from the books of Moses, from the Psalms and from the writings of the prophets. He once declared that the Scriptures cannot be broken. In His sermon on the Mount He solemnly asserted: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be

fulfilled." When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness He used as His weapon against the adversary three quotations from Old Testament Scripture. He fortified Himself and He replied the tempter by declaring, "It is written" and then He quoted from the writings of His own servants. There is no way to explain this save to admit that the Savior knew these holy men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.

It is worthy of special notice that Jesus quoted also from the book of the prophet Jonah. If there is one portion of the Bible which the hostile critic loves to use as a target it is this story of Jonah and the great fish which the Lord prepared to receive him. Shallow scoffers may delight in ridiculing this narrative, but the Lord Jesus Christ in a most striking manner puts upon it the stamp of His unqualified approval. He says: "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." The noisy infidel asserts that this story is absurd; Jesus Christ declares that it is true. Who is the more competent judge, the human skeptic or the divine Master?

All the Scripture which had been written at the time of our Savior's ministry, and that includes all of the Old Testament, was accepted by Him as the infallible Word of God. He who refuses thus to receive the Bible, charges Jesus with ignorance. The fact that the Master habitually glorified the Scriptures is another powerful reason why you and I should say: "Lord, Thou hast spoken. Thy Word I believe."

Its Supernatural Message. Another proof of the divine authorship of the Bible is found in the nature of its contents. The more we read its sacred pages the more we are convinced that men unaided by the Spirit of God

never penned such heavenly truth. Can any thinking man, for example, study the Ten Commandments and then assert that God did not inspire them? It is now about thirty-five hundred years since this law was first published and yet if a man were to attempt to revise it he would be regarded as foolhardy. Why? Because during all these thirty-five centuries this Decalogue has been universally regarded as perfect. Could an imperfect man write a perfect code of law? Those who deny the inspiration of the Bible will find some difficulty in explaining where Moses got the Ten Commandments.

When you, my dear friend, take up for earnest study such chapters as the twenty-third Psalm, or the fourteenth chapter of John's Gospel, or the eighth chapter of Romans, or the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, do you not find your heart swayed to believe that God must have inspired them? Do not the heavenliness of the truth and the majesty of the style draw you to the conviction that unaided man is simply incapable of such handiwork?

A few years ago, one of my parishioners, a young married woman, came to me for counsel. She stated that her husband, who was a skeptic, had given her some of his favorite literature and begged her to read it. She had yielded to his urging and had read a number of these infidelic books and magazines. As a result of this reading, her faith in the Bible had been undermined. She felt that she had slipped away from God and from the Truth which she once held dear. For this she was sorry. She did not want to lose her faith. She wanted to remain a Christian. Her purpose in coming to me was to secure some reading matter which would help to restore her weakened faith. She wanted an antidote for the poison which she had imbibed.

The counsel which I gave her was in substance as follows: "The Bible is its own best argument. 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.' The Spirit of God has convincing power when the arguments of men are weak. One does not need dogs to defend a lion. Let the lion out and he will defend himself. God's Word is charged with His own saving power. My advice to you is to read your Bible. I suggest that you begin with John's Gospel and the second Epistle of Peter. Read them both several times, carefully and prayerfully. I can suggest some books and some tracts which may be helpful to you but for the present I would recommend that you read your Bible daily and attend the services of the church regularly."

Shortly after this interview this family moved to another city and I am unable to report to what extent the wife acted on the advice which I gave her. But I have reason to believe that her faith was restored. I know that she became more active in the work of the church than she had ever been before.

Its Prophecies and Their Fulfillment. There is also a proof of the inspiration of the Bible in the wonderful fulfillment of its prophecies. Take for example that marvellous fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. Is not the prophet's description of the Man of Sorrows really amazing? When we read how He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, one would imagine that Isaiah had actually stood on Mount Calvary and was writing about something which he himself had seen. Yet, as a matter of fact, Isaiah wrote over seven hundred years before Jesus was born. How are we to explain this chapter with its accurate portrayal of the crucifixion? Let others say what they may; the only explanation which satisfies me is this that Isaiah was

one of those holy men who spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.

The Vicious Warfare Which It Has Withstood. The power of the Bible to endure abuse and to withstand the vicious assaults of its enemies also demonstrates that it is of God. It has been more violently assailed than any other book in the world. If all the books which have been written against the Bible were piled up, the heap would be as high as a church spire. In all ages the war against this Book has been kept up. It is just as bitter today as it ever was. And what is the result? After long centuries of continuous attempts to demolish it, the Bible still lives and it is more popular than ever. In the world's "best sellers," this Book always heads the list. Had it been merely a human document, it would have been overthrown and exploded long ago. But it is a divine revelation and therefore it outlives all its foes. The moving breath of God is in it and the protecting hand of God is over it. The Word of the Lord standeth sure.

Its Effect on Human Life. Our confidence that the very breath of God is in this Book is also confirmed when we notice the effect which it produces upon men and upon nations. There are countless thousands of men who have lived recklessly and godlessly until they came under the influence of the teachings of this Book. Under the power of this Book's message they became respectable, law-abiding, God-fearing citizens. You probably have a personal knowledge of many such cases. In every community there are thieves who have been made honest and industrious; there are drunkards who have been made sober; there are impure men and women who have been made chaste; all by being brought into contact with the teachings of this blessed Book. There are whole nations, who a century go, were a host of man-eating savages. Today

they are quite civilized, peaceable and trustworthy. Ask them to explain and they will assure you that the Bible has wrought the change. Such transformations are nothing short of miraculous. It requires a miracle book to produce them. Yet the Bible is working such miracles under our own observation, every day. Can we see these things and yet refuse to believe that it is the Lord's Book?

What Does the Bible Mean to You?

My dear friend, if you will permit it, I would like to press home to your heart a few searching questions. Do you read this Book which the Lord has caused to be written? When you do peruse these sacred pages, do you believe what you read? Is this Book the sole guide of your faith? Is your life being ruled and regulated by the will of God as it is here revealed? David the Psalmist said: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Can you make the same statement?

Neglected Bibles. This is said to be a reading age. I dare say that more money is being spent for reading matter today than ever before in the history of mankind. But can we boast of the present as a Bible reading age? Hardly. There are too many people today who will buy a Bible, they will keep it on display in the home, they will praise its precepts, they will designate it as the Book of books, and yet they do not read it faithfully. This best of books is too often a neglected book.

Dear friend, no doubt you do some reading. How much time do you spend with your Bible? If a friend were to write you a letter, you would not insult your friend by refusing to read it. If Almighty God, in His wisdom and love, sees fit to reveal to you a message, is it not a shameful sin on your part if you neglect to read it?

Bible Difficulties. Perhaps you say that there are things in the Bible which you do not understand. There may be some things closely related to the plan of salvation which are not clear to you. In that case, seek assistance. Any pastor will be glad to aid you. In the Lutheran Church, special series of lectures are given for the very purpose of clearing up just such difficulties as may be troubling you. Attend a series of such lectures. You will be interested and benefited. Certainly these matters are of sufficient importance to make it well worth your while to do so.

Bible Lovers are in Good Company. Before bringing to a close this chapter on the Book, I would like yet to say that those who follow this guide in all matters of faith and life, will find themselves in company of which they have no occasion to be ashamed. The best men and women who have ever lived are the ones who have accepted the Bible as the inspired Word of God, and they have trusted it as a safe guide. In art, in literature, in science, in business, in statesmanship, and in every other sphere of human activity, the leaders are almost without exception men who revere the Bible and follow its teachings.

During his last illness President Wilson is reported to have said: "The cure for our present day unrest and suspicion is to be found in the reading of the Bible."

It is said of John Quincy Adams that there were two things that he did every morning and with which he never allowed even the weightiest matters of state to interfere. The first thing was—he invariably took a bath, the weather permitting, using the Potomac river for that purpose. The other was—he always read three chapters of the Bible. More than once cabinet meetings were held up

and foreign ambassadors were kept waiting in the hall while he finished his daily three chapters.

A friend, visiting Patrick Henry not long before his death, found this brilliant statesman reading the Bible. "Here," said Patrick Henry to his visitor, as he held up the Book, "here is a Book worth more than all the other books that were ever printed. Yet it is my fortune never to have found time to read it with the proper attention and feeling until lately."

These men of achievement, with their calm judgment and all their keen intellect, were not ashamed to depend on this Book to guide them to the right path in life and to the safe path in death.

The Final Test. Death! That is the real test. Millions of times the doctrines of the Divine Word have been subjected to this critical trial and they have stood the ordeal triumphantly and gloriously. A mighty host of saintly souls, walking in the light of this Word, have faced death calmly, in the serene confidence that they were following a safe guide. Personally, I have stood at scores of deathbeds. I have seen aged fathers and mothers, I have seen young men and maidens, face to face with the grim reaper, yet unafraid. Some of them were even eager to depart. They had learned from this Book the significance of death. To them it was not a leap into the frightful unknown, but a brief walk through a passageway which leads to life eternal. This Book had led them to the Savior and they knew that He was leading them through the valley of the shadow to His Father's house on high. They felt secure because of their confidence that they were following a safe guide.

Dear friend, take this Book of God for your guide. There is safety in no other.

"How precious is the Book Divine,
By inspiration given:
Bright as a lamp its doctrines shine
To guide our souls to heaven.

This lamp through all the tedious night
Of life, shall guide my way,
Till we behold a clearer light
Of an eternal day."

PLAIN DIRECTIONS FOR THE MAN WHO WOULD BE SAVED

Thus Saith the Lord:

Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world! John 1, 29.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3, 16.

If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Rom. 10, 9, 10, 13.

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. Mark 16, 16.

Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. Acts 16, 30, 31.

Men and brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Acts 2, 37, 38.

Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. Acts 4, 10, 12.

Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of God and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel. Mark 1, 14, 15.

CHAPTER III

Plain Directions For the Man Who Would Be Saved

There are undoubtedly some Bible passages whose interpretation presents real difficulties. A half dozen doctors of divinity, all men of piety and learning, may undertake to explain one of these perplexities, and when they have finished, it is quite possible that no two of the explanations will agree.

Then, too, most of us have an itching curiosity for information which the Bible does not supply. Any child can ask questions about Biblical matters which the wisest theologian cannot answer. Take the subject of heaven for example. What we really know about the Father's house of many mansions is meager compared with what we would like to know. There are really but few passages which are descriptive of heaven, and some of these are in figurative language.

But if the Bible does not give us the detailed plans and specifications of the home on high, it does give us very plain directions how to reach it. The Scriptures make the way to heaven very plain. That is one of the blessed things about this wonderful Book. The difficult passages have no vital connection with the plan of redemption, and whatever God has seen fit to omit from His message to men, is not necessary for our salvation. That which is really needed to save a human soul from sin is not only recorded, but it is expressed in language which is unmistakably clear and plain.

We Are All Sinners

In the first place, the Bible makes it very plain that all men are sinners and that all need salvation. It is very necessary that this fact be made plain. It is impossible to induce a man to think seriously about salvation if he is not conscious of his soul's need. No man will think much of the Savior if he thinks but little of sin.

I know of a mother whose religious views are quite "modern." While she professes reverence for the Bible, she has in reality rejected most of its vital truths. Among the doctrines which she has discarded is that of punishment for sin. She rejects the idea of hell, and refuses to believe that God, who is love, will ever punish anybody. Her son, who is a university student, makes no profession of Christianity, and rarely attends church services of any character. The mother, noticing his indifference to the church, sought to reprove him. "Son, I am sorry that you are so reluctant to go to church. It would please me so much if you were to be baptized and unite with the church."

"What is the use, mother?" was the son's response. "Why should I be baptized and unite with the church?"

"Because it is the right thing to do. You wish to be saved, do you not?"

The son looked up in surprise. "Saved?" he asked. "What is there to be saved from?"

The mother professed to be shocked at such irreverence, but her son continued in all seriousness: "Mother, I have often heard you express your views. You do not believe in any punishment in the hereafter. If you are right, I am in no danger. There is nothing to be saved from. Why do you want me to put up an umbrella if there is no danger of rain?"

Such reasoning is natural if one has but a slight knowledge of sin and of its fearful consequences. But the Bible makes such ignorance inexcusable. The passages which would convict the soul of sin are many and positive. Turning to the Old Testament we read: "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." Eccl. 7, 20. The Apostle John in his First Epistle states this same fact in language which is strikingly clear and strong. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. * * * If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." 1 John 1, 8-10. There is nothing vague about these verses. They very definitely bring the charge of sin against every one of us.

Respectable Sinners. Now and then we find men who are not willing to plead guilty to the charge of sin. I have heard men reason something after this fashion: "I have a neighbor who is a drunkard; he is a sinner. I have another neighbor who runs a gambling den; he is a sinner. But as for me, I am respectable; I am not a sinner." Ah, we must remember that there are thousands of respectable sinners. Hosts of men enjoy the respect of their neighbors and yet in the sight of God they are transgressors of His law. Men usually take into consideration only the letter of the commandments while God judges by the spirit of the law.

To illustrate, let us take the Fifth Commandment, Thou shall not kill. Men will argue that if an individual has administered poison to his neighbor, or if he has used a weapon with fatal effect, a murder has been committed. But if no life has been taken violently, then this law has not been broken. But the Lord declares: Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer. Consequently, every

man who has been guilty of hatred has sinned in God's sight against this commandment.

Or, take the commandment, Thou shalt not commit adultery. We never call our neighbor an adulterer unless we know him to have been guilty of this sin in its grossest form. But in His exposition of this law, the Lord Jesus solemnly affirmed that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. Accordingly, every impure thought is an actual sin against this Sixth Commandment.

Guilty. Who among us can stand before the searching eye of the Lord and declare: "I have never carried in my breast a thought that was hateful, nor has there ever passed through my heart a thought which was impure." Who dare make a statement like this, standing in God's sight? I freely confess that I dare not. Would you dare make it, my dear reader? If not, then the charge against us is proved. We are sinners.

Sin's Penalty Is Death

In the same plain manner the Bible states the terrible consequences of sin. God is thereby most deeply offended and moved to temporal and eternal punishment. Nothing could be plainer than the language in which this fact is set forth. St. Paul, writing to the Romans, declares: "The wages of sin is death." Rom. 6, 23. The Prophet Ezekiel states the same truth when he writes: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Ez. 18, 20. In the Epistle to the Galatians we find a very definite declaration: "It is written, Cursed is every one who continueth not in all the things that are written in the book of the law to do them." Gal. 3, 10. We might quote whole pages of Scripture showing how sin brings upon a soul

the wrath of God and separates the sinner from God both in time and in eternity. Let us refer to one more passage: "Then shall He say unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursel, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels. * * * And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life." Matt. 25, 41-46. The prominence which Jesus here gives to the word "eternal," makes this passage very impressive indeed. Yet it is not an uncommon thing to hear men reason thus: "I do not believe that the good Lord will punish sinners. Or, if He does inflict a penalty, I do not believe that it will be eternal." How anyone, with a spark of respect for the authority of the Bible, can make such statements, is hard to understand. Certainly the language of Scripture is clear. All men are sinners, and all sin is hateful in the sight of the Lord. Because He Himself is infinitely holy, evil simply cannot dwell with Him. The sinner must in some manner be cleansed from his guilt or he cannot escape the wrath and punishment of God. Therefore it must be plain that all men need salvation.

Sin's Pardon Is Possible

Thanks be to God, He has given us the positive assurance that sin can be forgiven and that the forgiven sinner shall be saved. This same Word of God which so clearly reveals His hatred of sin, points out just as plainly the fact that He is infinitely merciful, and that His grace has devised a wonderful plan by which the sinner may be pardoned and restored again to favor in His sight. The blessed possibility of divine forgiveness is declared in every book of the New Testament and in most of the books of the Old Testament. David the

Psalmist rejoiced in the hope of the Lord's forgiving love when he solemnly affirmed: "There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared." Ps. 130, 4. The Prophet Isaiah makes the matter beautifully plain when he says: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Is. 1, 18. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Is. 55, 6. When we turn over to the New Testament, this matter is likewise made as plain as language can express it. Take for example the First Epistle of John when he writes: "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1, 7, 9. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2, 1, 2. It is impossible to read such declarations and yet remain in doubt as to whether sin can be pardoned. Nothing can be plainer or more positive than these Bible statements. Sinners may be forgiven.

Jesus, the Way to Pardon

Equally plain and positive is the Bible assurance that forgiveness of sins is possible only through the merits of Jesus Christ. Sins are forgiven because God loves the

sinner and because Jesus the Savior paid the price of the sinner's pardon. We by our depravity and disobedience have earned death; Jesus by His obedience to the Father and by His sufferings on the cross has earned our pardon. Without a Savior there could be no salvation, but when the Son of God offered Himself as a sacrifice He paid a price which outweighs the sins of all the world. Because the wages of sin is death, there can be no forgiveness of sin without the shedding of blood, but Jesus shed the blood which has power to cleanse the vilest sinner from all his guilty stains.

The Proof. This doctrine is clearly and emphatically taught in Holy Writ. Please read carefully a few of the passages which plainly set forth this blessed truth. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1, 29. "But God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being justified by His blood, shall we be saved from wrath through Him." Rom. 5, 8. 9. "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. 5, 20, 21. "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Eph. 1, 7. "Christ also hath once suffered for us, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the spirit." 1 Pet. 3, 18. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John 1, 7.

These verses from God's own Book leave no room for doubt as to the basis of the sinner's salvation. They clearly teach that without Christ we are without hope, but that in Him there is salvation full and complete. "Neither

is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Rom. 4, 12. Jesus stated a literal truth when He declared: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." John 14, 6.

It is not an uncommon thing to hear men sneer at what they term "blood theology." They deride the doctrine of a substitute Savior from sin. They insist that salvation is by character and not by the shed blood of Jesus. To the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" their answer is: "Be good. Keep the law." They are building their hopes on the sands of their own morality. To them the Rock of Ages, the crucified Christ, is a stumbling block.

The Lawyer's Question. There was once a lawyer who came to Jesus with the question: "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" The Savior asked him, What is written in the law? The lawyer very correctly answered: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." And then Jesus told this lawyer, "Thou hast answered right: this do and thou shalt live." But it was evident that this answer did not satisfy the lawyer for he immediately put another question. Why did this answer not satisfy the questioner? Chiefly because he felt that he had not met its requirement. This lawyer had not loved God with all his heart. He had not loved his neighbor as himself. If eternal life is obtainable only on these terms, then he was excluded.

A Question For You. To you, my dear friend who reads these pages, I put the question: Does it bring you any comfort to know that you may have eternal life by a perfect fulfillment of God's perfect law? I for one am quite ready to confess that this assurance brings me no

comfort whatever. It would cheer me just as much to be told that a man who is fifty feet tall shall have his sins forgiven, or that one who can speak two hundred languages shall be saved. Any proposal which lays before me requirements which I know I cannot meet, brings me no comfort and no hope. If God requires perfect obedience to His law, then the Ten Commandments are not for me a door to heaven.

The law is good, but since the fall
Its holiness condemns us all:
It dooms us for our sins to die,
And has no power to justify.

To Jesus we for refuge flee,
Who from the curse has set us free,
And humbly worship at His throne,
Saved by His grace through faith alone."

If it were possible for a man to keep God's law perfectly and thus save himself, it would not have been necessary for Christ to bleed and die on the cross. It was because you and I cannot be our own savior that God sent us a Savior in the person of His own Son. Any religion which does not offer men a way of escape from sin is but an empty shell. Christianity is the one true religion because it alone meets the deepest need of the sinner. In Christ alone we find a Savior who on Calvary's cross has made full satisfaction for all sin.

Salvation is by Christ Through Faith

And now it will be in place to raise the question, How is this salvation, worked out by Jesus Christ, to be applied to the needs of the individual sinner? Let us

turn again to the Bible for an answer, and here too we find the directions are clear and plain. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3, 16. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Acts 16, 31. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark 16, 16. "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 5, 1. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Eph. 2, 8. From such passages as these it is very evident that the salvation worked out by Jesus becomes the possession of the individual soul through faith. When, by the power of the Holy Spirit, a sinful man gives assent to the promises of the Gospel and puts his sincere trust in those promises, then the Savior of the world becomes the personal Savior of that individual. Faith is the hand which reaches out to take what God offers in Christ. Therefore he that believeth shall be saved.

Repentance Required. This saving faith is ever coupled with repentance. The heart which confidently clings to the salvation of Jesus is always one which feels sincere sorrow for sin. Repentance and faith—God has joined these two together; they cannot be put asunder. The message of John the Baptist and the message of Jesus when He began His ministry, was "Repent ye and believe the Gospel." True repentance means a sorrow which laments over the wickedness of sin and the offense which it gives to a holy God. There are men who regret the trouble into which their sins have plunged them, but that is not real repentance. The sorrow of the heart which God demands carries with it a hatred of sin and a longing

to get rid of it. The man who is truly contrite will start out today determined that with the help of God he will not repeat the sins of yesterday. He will not only be sorry for his sins but he will be sorry enough to quit.

Confession of Sins Necessary. A man who is repentant will also confess his faults. It is written: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1, 8, 9. The Lord here plainly demands confession as a condition of forgiveness. If we feel sorrow for sin we are not to pen that sorrow up in our heart. We are to express it in confession. King David declares that he found no peace for his soul until he had confessed his faults. In one of his penitential Psalms he writes: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

If You Are Not Saved, Whose Fault Is It?

Now my dear readers, at the beginning of this chapter it is asserted that the Bible makes the way of salvation very plain. It not this assertion justified? Do not the Bible verses which have been quoted clearly show that all men need salvation and that Jesus Christ is the one Savior who meets this need? And now the question—the vital question: Have you found this Way to which the Bible so plainly points? Can you truthfully say that you have taken Jesus as your personal Savior? If so, thank God for

your faith. If you are not a Christian, you must realize that the fault is not God's, but your own. No one who has read these verses will dare stand before the Lord and say: "I did not know what to do to be saved." God makes it plain that He loves all men. He makes it plain that Jesus died for all men. He makes it plain that the Gospel invites all men. He makes it plain that the Holy Spirit will give to all men the power to accept salvation. May He who has made the way so plain give to every reader of these pages the grace to say:

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling."

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. MATT. 16, 14-16.

Again the high priest asked him, and saith unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming down in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: What think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death. MARK 14, 61-64.

Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and the dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow does not cast out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. MATT. 12, 22-24.

Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands: and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless but believing. And Thomas answered and saith unto him, My Lord and my God. JOHN 20, 27, 28.

And lo, a voice out of the heavens, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. MATT. 3, 17.

CHAPTER IV

What Think Ye Of Christ?

Man has been defined as "the thinking animal." We are created with the power to think. This faculty gives us a tremendous advantage; at the same time it lays upon us a tremendous responsibility. Creatures who can think, should think. Furthermore, those who think are held responsible for right thinking. There are far too many men who do very little serious thinking. Some of those who do think avoid subjects which are of most vital importance. Others, after a hasty investigation, arrive at conclusions which are false and foolish.

Jesus once put to His Pharisee enemies the question: "What think ye of Christ?" In placing this question before them, He demanded of them that they do some serious thinking. He directed their attention to a topic of vital interest and of supreme importance. What think ye of Christ? is the question supreme. This is unchangeably true. While every individual has his personal problems, and every age has its own controversies, the chief question for all generations is the one relative to Jesus, proposed by Himself, "What think ye of Christ?"

Jesus is the judge before whom every soul must some day stand for judgment, nevertheless He by this question puts Himself up for appraisement, and appoints you and me and all men to be judges. "What think ye of Christ?"

The Judgment of Other Men

Since the days of Christ's first public appearance men have expressed a variety of opinions relative to His iden-

tity. Some have charged Him with being a bad man in league with the devil; others have called Him a prophet, and while they expressed admiration for His teachings, they rejected His claims of divine Sonship; still others, and their name is legion, for they are many, have lived and died with the conviction: "He is the Son of God, my Savior."

In Apostolic Days. After one of the Savior's miracles of mercy, the people who witnessed His amazing display of power raised the question: "Can this be the son of David?" But the judgment of the Pharisees was that Jesus was in league with Satan. "This man," they said, "doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils."

Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest, had Jesus on trial and because the Savior solemnly testified that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the high priest declared Him to be guilty of blasphemy.

In sharp contrast to these hostile judgments stands the testimony of John the Baptist, who pointed to Jesus and exclaimed: "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" Likewise is the devout confession of Thomas the Apostle, when he addressed Jesus as, "My Lord and my God!"

Since Apostolic Days. Coming down through the ages we find that men prominent in every sphere of human activity have borne hearty witness to their faith in Jesus as the Christ. Martin Luther, reformer and scholar, left on record this definite confession: "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord; who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature."

Tennyson, for many years Poet Laureate of England, expressed his attitude to the Master in these words: "What the sun is to that flower, Jesus Christ is to me. He is the Sun of my soul."

Gladstone, the statesman, was not ashamed to confess: "All I think, all I write, all I am is based on the divinity of Jesus Christ, the central hope of our poor race."

Sir James Young Simpson, one of the most eminent physicians of his generation, was asked as to his greatest discovery. He replied as follows: "I discovered that I was a sinner and that Jesus Christ was my Savior."

When Lord Kelvin, the Scottish scientist, was asked by one of his students as to his greatest discovery, he made answer: "To me the most valuable of all discoveries I have ever made was when I discovered my Savior in Jesus Christ."

As we make a study of men with a view of determining the judgment which they have passed on Christ, it is interesting to notice how these various men themselves stand in the judgment of future generations. Invariably, those who in their judgment have condemned Jesus have by that verdict condemned themselves, while those who in their judgment have exalted the Master, have thereby exalted themselves.

What Is Your Verdict?

While it is well enough to know what others say about Jesus, we are not using the Savior's question as He would have us use it until we apply it to our own soul and pass judgment. Jesus once put to His disciples the question: "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?"

This question, however, He immediately followed with another: "But whom say ye that I am?" What other men think about Jesus is well worthy of consideration, but you and I are here exhorted to put our own faith in the test tube and analyze it. "Whom say ye that I am?"

Supreme Issues Involved. Of course Jesus did not put this question because of any petty curiosity, but because He wants men to have clear views and positive conviction on a matter of such vital importance. When you give your judgment of Christ, you are expressing your attitude to all the really great issues of life: God, sin, life, death, salvation and eternity. Centuries ago, Solomon declared that "as a man thinketh in his heart, so he is." What a man thinks of Jesus Christ determines, more than anything else, what that man is. We classify men in a variety of ways. In the sight of God there are but two classes of men: those who accept Jesus as His Son in the flesh, and those who deny Him. God's attitude to you as well as your attitude to God are involved in this question: What think ye of Christ?

A Life or Death Decision. It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment. The judgment! Christ's day of judgment is yet to come; your day of judgment is now. Christ's future judgment of you will depend upon your present judgment of Him. "Except ye believe that I am he," He declares, "ye shall die in your sins." It is also written: "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." "What think ye of Christ?" Your fate in eternity is determined by your response to this question. Answer this question aright and you save all; give a faulty answer and you lose all—even your own soul.

Every Man May Know the Truth

In a land of Bibles there is no excuse for the man who has hazy views or negative convictions relative to Christ. God has supplied His Son with ample credentials. The chief purpose of the Bible is to make this matter plain. The theologians speak of the Scriptures as being Christo-centric, and they mean by this that Christ is the center of God's revelation to men. The Bible is Christ in print. He is concealed in the Old Testament; He is revealed in the New. If men are ignorant or unbelieving it is not because they cannot know the truth. What are the facts as set forth in the Bible?

As to His Birth. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary. Is this truth plainly taught in God's inspired Word? It certainly is. We turn to the first chapter of Matthew and we read: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel; which being interpreted is, God with us." Equally explicit is the record of Luke as found

in the first chapter of his Gospel. The angel, addressing Mary, said to her: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." When the skeptic questions the virgin birth of our Savior, it is not because he has no access to the truth. The Lord has had the facts on record for nearly nineteen centuries. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary.

As to His Names. Among men, names are given with little or no regard for their meaning. We may call a girl "Irene" who is anything but peace-loving. A boy may be an out and out coward and yet we may name him "William." But when God bestows a name it signifies something definite. The name indicates the characteristics or the work of the person named. The names applied to Jesus in the Bible are all God-given or God-inspired. These names, therefore, tell us who and what He is.

There are literally scores of Scripture verses in which Jesus is called "Christ the Lord." The "Christ" signifies the "Anointed One." The "Messiah" has the same meaning. Jesus is so named because He was anointed with the Holy Spirit to be our Prophet, High Priest and King. The title "Lord" indicates one who has authority, especially one who has supreme authority. The name "Immanuel" is also one which is applied to the Virgin's Son. The Lord Himself interprets this name as meaning, "God with us." The name "Jesus" means "Savior." The Lord explained to Joseph that Mary's Child should be called by this name because it is He that shall save His people from their sins. The Prophet Isaiah, writing of this Child who was to be born, declares that His name shall be called "Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

These names, and many others which might be cited, plainly indicate that the highest titles of God are freely given to Jesus. Furthermore, it is by God's order that His names are applied to His Son. These names are revealed to us to strengthen our faith in our Savior. "What think ye of Christ?" Let His very names assist us to confess with confidence: He is the only-begotten Son of God, who, for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

As to His Works. During Christ's earthly ministry He did many things which no mere man ever has done or ever can duplicate. He performed a variety of miracles which are possible only to one who has divine power. He gave sight to men born blind. He restored the hearing of deaf men. He loosened the tongue of those who were dumb and caused them to speak plainly. Men who were paralyzed were commanded to walk and they obeyed His voice. When the sea was tempest-tossed He bade the winds and the waves be still, and immediately they were hushed. On at least three occasions He spoke to the dead and even they heard His voice and stood up. After Jesus Himself had been crucified, dead and buried, He came forth from the tomb and showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs.

Jesus did not perform His mighty wonders primarily to prove that He is the Son of God, yet they do help to establish our faith in Him. Jesus Himself intended that His miracles should serve as proofs. On one occasion He declared: "The very works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." At another time He appealed to His disciples in these words: "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake." What think ye of

Christ in view of His works? Must He not be the promised Son of God?

As to His Teachings. The doctrines of Jesus were as amazing as were His miracles. With the utmost freedom and frankness He discussed life's deepest problems. The multitude who heard Him were astonished at His wisdom. Even some of those who approached Him in a hostile attitude were compelled to admit that no man had ever spoken as He spoke. On one occasion while He was teaching in the temple, the Jews who heard Him marvelled and said: "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" Here is indeed a staggering mystery for those who deny that the doctrine of Jesus is of God. Jesus was reared as an ordinary peasant youth. He had no more advantages, in an educational way, than thousands of other boys of His day. Yet we find Him teaching doctrines so majestic in form and so heavenly in their thoughts that they have called forth the hearty admiration of all classes of thinking men. Furthermore, His teachings have stood the test of nineteen centuries of study. Fearlessly He discussed God and His kingdom, man and his various duties, sin with its cause and its cure, the Church and its mission, life and death, heaven and hell, the judgment and eternity and dozens of other deep and vital issues. After all these centuries of research, no man is able to point out even the slightest error in any statement ever made by Jesus. This peasant Man of Galilee stands today the universally recognized Teacher of teachers.

My dear reader, what is your explanation of this marvel? "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" Is not His very utterance charged with the wisdom of heaven? If so, then must not He who proclaimed this wisdom have come down from heaven?

As to His Own Claims. The assertion is sometimes made that Jesus never professed to be more than a man. This is absurd. Repeatedly Jesus put forth the claim that He is God. He once stood in the temple and declared: "I and the Father are one." His Jewish enemies understood this as a claim to divinity, for they immediately took up stones to cast at Him. On another occasion Jesus solemnly asserted: Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. This statement likewise the Jews interpreted as a claim that He is divine. When the Savior was on trial before the Sanhedrin, the high priest said to Him: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said." There are many other similar passages. In addition to these direct statements, every promise of salvation through Jesus implies a claim of divinity, for who can forgive sins but one, even God?

There are also those who contend that Christianity is a striving for the Christly life and that the question whether Christ is the God-man or merely a good man is a matter of detail having no special significance. Such reasoning is false and foolish. Suppose a man, professing to be the Prince of Wales, were to visit your city. As heir to England's throne he would be received. Banquets and receptions would be given in his honor. Columns of space in the newspapers would be devoted to him. His acquaintance would be sought by the social leaders of the town; his manners would be observed and praised; his views on various subjects would be printed and freely discussed. After a week of spendid entertainment, the city bids farewell to its honored guest and then learns that he is not the Prince of Wales but a vaudeville actor from Chicago. Would your fellow citizens continue to praise his clothes and his manners? Would they still

quote approvingly from his interviews? Never! Because the whole basis of his temporary popularity was a fraud, every mention of his name would arouse indignation and contempt.

Jesus Christ stood before the world and repeatedly put forth the claim that He is the eternal Son of God. In view of this claim we must conclude either that He is God in human flesh or else that He is a deceiver. There is no room for a stand between these two positions. Is anyone who reads these pages ready to brand Jesus as an impostor? God forbid! Then there is no alternative but this: He must be the God-man, the world's Savior.

A Definite Decision Called For

It is saddening to read the quibbling, sometimes blasphemous, statements of modern men who are not ready to take Jesus at His own word. There are those who will go so far as to assert that Jesus meant well but He was a mistaken fanatic. Others, milder in their unbelief, will say that Jesus is the son of Joseph and Mary, a great leader in His time and a great teacher for all time. It is saddening also to hear still others say: "I have never given much thought to the matter. I have no definite convictions on this question."

My dear reader, whoever you may be, this question proposed by Jesus is a call for definite convictions. What think ye of Christ? What is the answer of your heart? There are some of the questions of the day which you do not need to consider unless you wish to do so, but this question of Jesus you must consider. You must accept Him as the Son of God in the flesh or reject Him as one unworthy of your confidence. There is no middle ground, and there is no neutral attitude possible. Until

you come out for Christ as the only-begotten Son of God, you are against Him.

As you conclude the reading of this chapter, will you not give an answer to the Savior's question? As you regard the glory of God and the value of your own soul, let your response be definite and positive. Your Master asks you: "What think ye of Christ?" Give Him from your heart the reply which He seeks and to which He is by every right entitled. "Thou art the Son of the living God, my Savior. Amen."

WHY NOT JOIN THE CHURCH?

THUS SAITH THE LORD:

Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. HEB. 10, 24, 25.

I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord. Ps. 122, 1.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. EX. 20, 8.

*They then that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls * * * praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.* ACTS 2, 41-47.

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. ROM. 12, 4, 5.

And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. EPH. 2, 20-22.

Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. MATT. 16, 18.

CHAPTER V

Why Not Join the Church?

While the people of Israel were on their pilgrimage from Egypt to Canaan, they encamped for some months under the shadow of Mount Sinai. During their stay in this region they received a visitor in the person of Hobab, the brother-in-law of Moses. As the Israelites were preparing to continue their journey to the land which the Lord had promised them, Moses extended to Hobab a very cordial invitation to join them in their pilgrimage. "Come thou with us," he urged, "and we will do thee good."

Hobab was not a Jew; he was an outsider. The idea of casting his lot with the people of Jehovah did not at once appeal to him. But Moses continued to press his invitation, holding out to his brother-in-law two inducements to accompany them. The first argument was, "We will do thee good. Jehovah hath spoken good concerning Israel. And it shall be if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what good soever Jehovah shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee." Moses loved Hobab and he earnestly desired that his friend and brother-in-law should partake of those blessings to which God was leading them.

The other argument put forth by Moses was an appeal for Hobab's assistance. "Leave us not, I pray thee," he pleaded, "forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou shalt be to us instead of eyes." As a resident of that district, Hobab knew the country—every foot of it. He knew where the springs and the pastures were located. He was familiar with the shortest routes. He was aware of the places

where danger lurked. Hence Moses urged him to give them the benefit of his practical knowledge.

We are not told definitely whether Hobab joined the Israelites on their march through the trackless wilderness, but it seems probable that he did. If he went with them, there was doubtless an interchange of mutual benefits. Hobab gave something but he received vastly more. He gave practical assistance and he received both temporal advantages and spiritual blessings.

This incident of the Israelites and Hobab illustrates the relation of the Christian Church to every outsider. As Israel's leader spoke to Hobab, so the Church may address every soul who is outside the pale of her own membership. "We are journeying unto the place of which Jehovah said, I will give it you. Come thou with us."

Some of you who read these pages are perhaps not connected with any Christian congregation. The purpose of this chapter is to knock earnestly at you door and lovingly to invite you: Come with us. By uniting with a truly Christian congregation you may enjoy a number of high and holy privileges and at the same time be in a better position to assist with the most blessed work on earth. Come now, let us reason together. Why not join the Church?

You Need the Church

There are very few men who have any objections to offer when they see some silver haired grandmother, hymn book in hand, wending her way to her church on a pleasant Sunday morning. If several children accompany Grandma as she departs for the house of worship, the male observer still has no criticism to make. But do men, with their clubs and their lodges, and their diversified

business and social interests, do these busy men need the Church? Ah, in the mind of some, this is quite a different matter. A prominent merchant of Pittsburgh recently expressed himself in substance as follows: "Every community should have a church. I do not feel the need of it personally, but for the sake of the women and children churches should be maintained. There are even men who seem to find the Church's influence helpful to them. I have no grievance against the churches. I wish them well. In fact I would not care to live in a community where there are no churches." There is the attitude of too many of our lords of creation. My dear male reader, when we lay down the proposition, "You need the Church," we are not referring merely to your dear mother, your Christian wife and your growing children. YOU are included. You need the Church.

God Has Established the Church. The Lord knows what is in the human heart. He knows this world in which we live. He knows life, with its limitations and its possibilities. Almighty God, who knows all things, deems the Church a necessity for us. The man who disclaims any need for the Church is setting his own judgment above that of his Creator. Our God does nothing without a wise purpose. If He sees fit to establish His Church on earth for you and for me, that implies our need of that which His wisdom provides. There are those who attempt to praise Jesus and yet belittle the Church. A prominent Hindu is reputed to have said: "We admire your Jesus but we do not desire your Church." This is also the professed attitude of a goodly number in our own land. The inconsistency of this position becomes apparent at once when we remember that Christ is the head of the Church. To hold one's self aloof from the Church is disloyalty to Him. The Church is His Bride.

He who speaks ill of the Bride incurs His displeasure. There are of course men and women identified with the Church who are not above criticism. Nobody claims that the Church's earthly membership is without faults. To point out the weaknesses of individual church members is a simple matter, but to find fault with the Church as such is a serious offense. When we remember that it is the institution of the Lord Christ, as dear to Him as the apple of His eye, it must be plain that the Lord will hold no man guiltless who treats His Church with disdain.

For Your Growth in Grace. The work of the Church is not only to win unsaved souls for Christ their Redeemer but also to build up in the faith those who have accepted Him as their Savior and King. Those who are Christians need the Church for their spiritual growth. To the Church God has committed the means of grace. There can be no advancement in Christian life without those things over which the Church holds stewardship. Jesus Himself is the bread of life. There is no growth in Christianity apart from Him. But He is to be found in the midst of His Church. His promise is: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." This promise not only assures us of Christ's presence, but it also guarantees His blessing where two or three of His followers are gathered together for worship. When the Bible admonishes us not to forsake our own assembling together, that is certainly a command to go to Church.

But some one may raise the question: "Can I not secure all these benefits without membership in the Church Are not all Christian congregations glad to have visitors worship with them?" Yes, guests are indeed welcome in any Christian church service. At the same time, intelligent Christians will not be satisfied to remain church

visitors for an indefinite period of time. A normal man wants a home. A normal Christian desires a church home.

Occasionally some one will make the assertion that since the radio has come into common use, church attendance is not necessary. One can sit at home and enjoy the service. The radio has doubtless been of great service to those who are shut in, and to others to whom the Church is inaccessible. All that can be broadcast of many church services goes on the air every Lord's Day. Many a man will testify that he has heard some excellent sermons over his radio. But has anyone ever sat down before the loud speaker and really worshiped? Hardly. It is safe to say that those who get the most out of a radio service heard in their home are the very ones who long most to be in the house of God with the people of God. A satisfactory substitute for church services never has been and never can be devised.

The rule is that there is no spiritual development where there is no regular participation in the services of the Church. When men become indifferent to the Church they become careless in other respects. If you long for a closer walk with God you must cleave closely to the Church. That is God's arrangement. They are planted in the house of Jehovah; they shall flourish in the courts of our God.

For Christian Fellowship. We have a divine command to pray in secret. The soul has need of communion with God in the privacy of one's own chamber. But we also need contact with other believers. Attention has been called to the admonition not to forsake our own assembling together. There is divine wisdom back of this command. Christians need this fellowship one with another. The coal that remains white with heat while it is with other glowing coals in the grate, will soon blacken

and cool if placed alone on the hearth. In like manner, you are in greater danger of losing the warmth of your Christian love and zeal when you are isolated from contact with other believers than when you are in close fellowship with other Christians. There are some associations which make it easy for you to fall into temptation and sin; association with others helps you in your fight against these evils. The most heavenly place to be found on earth is in the Christian Church. Here is God's own haven for souls in adversity and in prosperity. It is a good thing at all times to be with the people of God.

For the Benefits of the Sacraments. A sacrament is a holy rite instituted by Christ Himself, whereby with visible means the treasures of the Gospel are offered, given and sealed to us. God's people in the Old Testament had circumcision as an initiation ceremony, and the Passover as a memorial of their deliverance from the perils and bondage of Egypt. The Church of the New Testament has Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These Christian sacraments are not merely signs or representations of spiritual benefits but are actual channels by means of which the grace of God is conveyed to the soul. By Baptism we enter into a covenant with the Triune God; by the Lord's Supper this covenant is renewed, confirmed and sealed.

Baptism is not simply water, but it is the water comprehended in God's command and connected with God's Word. This Sacrament is therefore a ceremony of very great importance. It has back of it the very definite command of Christ: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." It has also connected with it a very definite promise: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." This little book will

undoubtedly fall into the hands of some readers who are not baptized. To your heart, my dear friends, I would like to press home a few earnest questions. If you feel any sense of love and loyalty to the Lord Jesus, do you think it right to neglect something which He solemnly commands? Since the Lord Himself has instituted Baptism, and linked it up so intimately with salvation, do you feel safe in continuing to go unbaptized? Why not decide the matter and submit to Baptism without any further delay? Remember the Lord's promise: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.

The Lord's Supper is also a sacrament which you should be enjoying. Jesus has given the command: "This do in remembrance of me." On the night of His betrayal, the Savior expressed a dying request that we remember Him in this manner. Furthermore, if we fail to commune, we deprive ourselves of heavenly food given for the nourishing and strengthening of our soul. In this feast of grace Jesus gives us His own body and blood to assure us of the remission of our sins. Accordingly, if we despise the Lord's Supper, we are guilty of a two-fold sin. We sin against the Lord who gave the command: This do; we also sin against our own souls in depriving ourselves of that blessed spiritual refreshment which Christ bestows in this Sacrament.

But the administration of these Sacraments is in the hands of the Church. Practically, we are dependent upon the Church for them. Here then is an additional valid argument. We need the Church because we need the Sacraments.

When This Need is Most Keenly Felt. There are times when the air is so balmy and the sky is so clear that we think but little of shelter. But when the sky is over-

cast and a storm is close at hand we feel the need of a roof. There are times in life when our surroundings are so pleasant that we are tempted to forget life's serious duties and grave responsibilities. A feeling of independence and self-sufficiency may assert itself. Then the scene changes; dangers threaten or sorrow overtakes us. Immediately we desire a refuge in our distress.

There are homes in which little or no thought is given to the Church until serious sickness and death are at hand. Then the Church's pastor is sent for. The Church's prayers are desired. The Church's quartet is wanted. The Church's services have become a necessity.

We need the Church all along the journey of life. Life's storms only stress that need. Why wait until the storm is actually upon us? Why postpone the steps necessary to secure a church home? Why not join the Church?

The Church Needs You

Every believer who unites with the Church gets out of it vastly more than he can possibly put into it. We need the Church a great deal more than the Church needs us. At the same time, any man who is eager to serve the Church will find a great deal in the way of helpful service which he can render. The argument, "the Church needs you," is not only valid, but it is one which has a real appeal to many a man. In the service of God and man, you want to be a lifter not a leaner. In the task of making the world better, you want to be a helper not a hindrance. Very well, there is much of the most blessed work in the world which can be done in connection with the Church. Yes, there is much of the most helpful service which cannot be rendered apart from the Church. The Church is God's own institution to promote His glory

and the welfare of His creatures. In this great work of God's Church, your help is needed.

Your Influence is Needed. There is no one whose life concerns himself alone. What you do or leave undone is exerting an influence upon others. You have friends, perhaps brothers and sisters, or it may be, sons and daughters, who feel the power of your example. You are exerting an influence either for or against the Church. If you are not formally connected with the Church, then certainly your influence is not definitely for it. In fact, you are not coming out whole-heartedly for Christ if you hold yourself aloof from His Church. Now there are many powerful influences in this world which are positively opposed to the Church. These are the forces of evil with which no right-thinking man wishes to be identified. Personally, I wish to throw my influence as fully as possible on the side of the Christian Church. Do you not feel the same way about it, my dear reader?

Your Service is Needed. There are probably some institutions in which some of us could find nothing at all which we could do. If we were to go into some of our large mills or foundries to offer our services, some of us would be in the way of the workers. But in the Christian Church there is work for every member. In the program of the Church, there is employment for men and for women, for young and for old. You, my dear friend, have some gift or some talent of which the Church has need. If you have the gift to teach, the Church has steady employment for you. If you have a singing voice, you can make splendid use of it in the service of the Church. There are always the sick to be visited and the poor to be helped, perhaps you can find a place of usefulness in such work. There are outsiders to be invited and strangers to be welcomed, it may be that such service is in

line with your gifts. There is ushering to be done, an annual canvass to be conducted and property to be looked after, for some of which tasks you may have a special ability. It is quite probable that you can take a helpful part in the work of one of the congregational organizations. Even the little child may invite his playmate to Sunday School. No matter who you are or what your circumstances may be, the Lord has some work for you in His Church. By giving your service you may help His work along. By withholding your service you are hindering the great cause of His kingdom.

Your Financial Support is Needed. God doubtless could have arranged to carry on His work without our giving, but as a matter of fact He has from the very beginning of time instructed His people to bring an offering when they come before Him for worship. He knows that it is good for us to exercise the grace of giving. To receive without giving is to become stagnant. Sweet water must always flow. Green scum forms on stagnant ponds. Receiving without giving is stagnation. To give as we receive is blessed. We receive so much through the Church that we should cheerfully bring liberal gifts for the Church's support. We cannot buy our way into heaven, but if the Lord can use our gifts while we are on the way to heaven, we should bring them gladly.

Because the Lord has ordained this plan of having His Church supported by the gifts of His people, it is correct to say that the Church needs your financial help. Your money is needed in the work of some local congregation. It is needed in the sending forth of missionaries. It is needed for the education of ministers. It is needed to maintain homes for the orphans and for the aged. Join the Church and give it your financial support. The work of the Lord has need of it.

Excuses Not Valid

The excuses which men sometimes offer for not joining the Church have no weight. If one professes to be a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, there is really no valid excuse for failure to unite with His Church, although men try with a variety of arguments to justify their holding aloof from the Church. One will tell us: "I can be just as good a Christian outside the Church as those who hold membership in it." Another insists: "There are hypocrites in the Church and on that account I refuse to join." A third man declares: "I am not good enough to be a member of the Church." Now, my unchurched reader, your reason for not having united with the Church is probably very similar to one of these three. It is quite safe to assert that yours is no better than these three. If we examine these three arguments we will have gone over the ground covered by the excuses most commonly given.

I Can be a Good Christian Outside the Church. A Christian is a follower of Jesus. Can you be a consistent follower of Jesus and yet refuse to have fellowship with His Church? Remember it is the all-wise Lord who has established the Church on earth. Its very presence among us implies that we need it. If God says you need the Church, dare you dispute with Him? Is that the Christian thing to do? It is indeed possible to be a Christian without being a member of a Christian congregation, but to say that church membership makes no difference in your standing as a Christian, is simply not true.

There are Hypocrites in the Church. Not all church members measure up to the standard which they should attain. We all freely admit this. There are some whose life does not harmonize with their profession. Here and

there is one who does not pay his debts. There may be a few in every congregation who do not really believe what they profess to believe. But the Christian Church is not to be condemned because a few unworthy individuals are enrolled in its membership. There is an old proverb which declares that imitation is the sincerest flattery. Men do not try to counterfeit an inferior article. It is the best baking powder or the successful automobile which is imitated. Hypocrites are counterfeit church members. Therefore Christian church membership must be something worth while or men would not attempt to imitate it.

I am Unfit for Membership in the Church. When Jesus began to preach He laid down the conditions for entrance into the kingdom of God: "Repent ye and believe the Gospel." Repentance and faith are still the requirements of church membership. God does not require anything more; He is not satisfied with anything less. Accordingly, the man who is not good enough to join the Church is not ready to die. There may be some who hold the mistaken idea that to join the Church one must attain sinless perfection. Perfection is our goal but it is not our attainment. The Church on earth is not a museum for saints but a hospital for sinners. If you, dear reader, are truly sorry for your sins and if you sincerely believe the Gospel, you may and should unite with the Church.

So then, my dear friend, the arguments which are put forth for not joining the Church are all false and foolish. Not one of them will stand close examination. Put aside, therefore, your objections and resolve to seal your confession of Christ by uniting with His Church. With all the earnestness at my command, I invite you. In the name of the Lord whom I serve I beseech you: "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good."

DO IT NOW!

Thus Saith the Lord:

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Matt. 6, 33.

We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.) Cor. 6, 1, 2.

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Is. 55, 6, 7.

Watch ye therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh. Matt. 24, 42-44.

And the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. Matt. 25, 10-13.

CHAPTER VI

Do It Now!

The men and women who are not professed Christians and members of the Church may be divided into two classes. To the first class belong the deliberate unbelievers and the outspoken opponents of the Church. These persons say in substance: "I have considered the matter, and I have fully made up my mind that I will never accept the Christian religion. I regard Jesus as an impostor and His Church is a fraud, and I have determined that I will have nothing to do with either."

The other class includes those who have given the claims of Jesus little or no serious consideration. They are not actively hostile to the Church. Their attitude is rather one of inactive indifference. Many in this class would express the thoughts of their heart approximately thus: "I have never had much instruction in matters of religion and therefore I do not have very clear views or very positive convictions. I have never made a profession of Christianity although I suppose I should do so, I have no objections to the Church. I think it is a nice thing to have a church home. Some time, later on, I shall likely unite with the Church."

Some of you who read this little volume may belong to this second class. Perhaps the Spirit of God has already worked conviction of sin in your heart. It may be that you are almost persuaded to turn to the Lord Jesus and accept Him as your Savior. Or, it is possible that some of you who peruse these pages have embraced Christ as your personal Savior, but have never united with His Church. You may have given the Church favorable consideration

and are now waiting for a more convenient time to seek membership. To all of my dear readers who belong to this second class, this final chapter has a special message. I beseech you by the mercies of God, do not put off matters which are of such vital importance. Do it now.

Get First Things First

Even when we are dealing with matters not spiritual, it is the part of prudence to give first consideration to the thing which is first in importance.

There are some duties which are more important than others. In this busy age, there are many duties which seem to thrust themselves upon us. But if we examine the items which make up our life's program we will readily see that they do not all have the same rank or value. We do some things because they minister to our comfort or pleasure; other things are necessary to preserve life. These two classes of duties are evidently not on an equality.

In a country home a woman was cleaning a garment in gasoline. In some manner the inflammable stuff was ignited, and very quickly the flames spread over the kitchen. The woman's husband, who was in the barn, hearing the commotion and seeing the smoke, came running with a bucket. Peering into the house, he decided that the building was doomed and, dropping the bucket, he began with frantic haste to carry out the household goods. Furniture, clothing, and even rugs were being moved to a place of safety when the woman paused, and turning to her husband with a look of anguish, she cried: "Where is Albert?"

In their anxiety to save their furniture these parents had neglected to think of their boy. Bounding up the

stairs the father found his son asleep in a room which was already filled with smoke. He grasped the lad and carried him from the building. A moment later, the stairway collapsed with a crash.

"Foolish parents," you may say, "their first thought should have been of saving life, and after that they could have considered the salvage of their household effects."

Yes, foolish indeed, and yet this is not an uncommon sort of folly. It is the folly of countless thousands of people who are feverishly concerned about matters of minor importance while other matters of vastly greater importance are being neglected.

Duties of first importance should receive first attention. The writer has a friend who recently went to the hospital to have a troublesome gland removed from her neck. In making an examination, the hospital surgeon discovered a far more serious ailment, a goiter, of which the woman was not aware. The gland was causing discomfort but the goiter was threatening her life. A double operation was deemed inadvisable. Therefore the goiter was removed immediately. The operation to remove the gland took place several months later. All will agree that this was the only wise course to pursue. To postpone the thing which seriously endangers life would be folly.

So soon as we have decided which of two duties is first in importance, the decision as to which of the two should have first consideration is easily made. The question, Which is life's supreme duty? has been answered by One to whose authority most of us reverently submit. In His Sermon on the Mount the Son of God bids men: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." In these words the Master sets forth man's chief business in life.

God and His Kingdom are to Have First Place

Jesus had been sounding a warning against anxious care about food and clothing. He had shown that all such worry is both foolish and sinful. Then at the conclusion of this portion of His discourse He gives an antidote for this poison of worldly anxiety in these words: "Seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness." A kingdom is naturally a realm ruled by a king. The kingdom of God is that realm of grace and glory under the dominion of the Lord. A kingdom implies essentially two elements, a king and a body of subjects. Now in the kingdom of God, the king is the Lord Jesus, and the subjects are all the souls who obey His will. Since sin has come into the world we are all born sinners. That is, we are by nature outside the kingdom of God. We remain out until we take Jesus in. Every soul born into this world is an outsider until he finds Jesus and is found by Jesus. When we find the King we find the kingdom. This, Jesus says, is the thing of supreme importance in life. Because in importance it holds first place on life's program, it should have first place in our consideration.

Neglect of this vital duty makes life a failure. A man may write the most popular book, he may paint the most beautiful picture, or he may construct the most marvellous bridge, yet if he dies without having found the true King and His kingdom, he has lived in vain.

There was once a rich and powerful king who lived in luxury and in splendor. He was lauded as one of the greatest and most fortunate of men. When he gave a reception, a thousand princes and noblemen were proud to accept his invitation. But while the festivities of that reception were at their height, God wrote His judgment of that king upon the wall, and that judgment

translated was: "Weighed in the balance and found wanting." The world regarded him as a superman, but in the balance of God he was a light-weight. He had done a great many things but he had not attended to life's chief duty. I wonder how many are living today, who are heroes in the eyes of the world but light-weights in the eyes of God!

I have in mind a man, recently deceased, who achieved some very remarkable results in the realm of the vegetable kingdom. He is internationally known as the originator of many new varieties of fruits and flowers. I have no desire to pass judgment on this eminent gentlemen. The world calls him a wizard. He called himself an infidel. The Lord Jesus says that he that believeth not shall be damned.

There are many things which dazzle the eyes of men and yet do not give a man any standing with God. No matter how great our achievements may be in other spheres of activity, these things do not atone for failure to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Many professed Christians do not meet the Savior's requirement. Jesus demands first place in our heart and life. Too many who profess Christianity give their religion only a subordinate place on life's program. I have a friend who is a successful merchant. He is listed in the telephone directory as a merchant and he gives the greater part of his time to the management of his store. But he also has a list of real estate which he endeavors to sell as he has opportunity. He speaks of his real estate business as his side line. I fear that many who wish to be classed as Christians carry their religion merely as a side line. Their real business in life is making money or perhaps seeking pleasure. They go to church when it does not interfere with any of their other plans. They

will contribute to their church only such sums of money as they can spare without any inconvenience to themselves. The kingdom of God seems to be given a place in their life, but it is certainly not first place. Christianity is their side line.

There are professed Christian fathers who seem vastly more concerned about their son's progress in mathematics than they do about his instruction in the things of the Spirit of God. There are many professed Christian mothers who give more thought to a daughter's personal appearance than they do to the sin of her soul. I knew of a mother who refused to send her daughter for religious instruction because the time of the pastor's lecture conflicted with the time when the daughter wished to take a dancing lesson.

It is not an uncommon thing for a wife to fret and worry about the vices of her husband, not because they endanger the salvation of the soul but because they disturb the peace of the household and interfere with the income of the home. In a hundred ways many who profess to be in the kingdom of God show that they do not give His kingdom the first and foremost place in their heart. When the Master says, Seek ye first his kingdom, that exhortation is a rebuke to any man who tries to give Christ a subordinate place in his life.

The Urgent "Now"

While this admonition reveals glaring inconsistencies in the lives of many who wish to be classified as Christians, I feel justified in saying that it has a special application to those who have not definitely taken Jesus as their Savior and King. Until a man has sought and found the kingdom of God, he is not ready to live, he is not ready to die,

nor is he ready for the judgment. Some one has well said: "Religion is the first thing and the last thing. Until a man has found God and been found of God, he begins at no beginning and he works to no end." Yet there are thousands in this so-called Christian America who have never seriously considered the promises and the claims of the Lord Jesus. They consider the body and ignore the soul. They plan for time but neglect eternity.

A frivolous young woman with some talent for singing was in conversation with her aunt who was a devout Christian. They were discussing the younger woman's plans for the future. With a great deal of enthusiasm the girl explained to her aunt that she expected to spend four years at some conservatory of music; after this she would spend two years under a famous teacher in New York; then she would spend two more years in Europe. Following this she hoped to secure a part in grand opera and spend five years on the stage. By this time, she explained, some wealthy man would doubtless seek her hand in marriage, and she would spend the rest of her life as a wife and mistress of a refined home. The aunt listened in silence while the plans of her niece were thus unfolded, and then addressing the girl in a loving, earnest manner, she said: "My dear, you have said nothing about any plans for the world to come. Where do you expect to spend eternity?" The young lady stammered for a moment and then admitted that she had never really given much thought to religious matters. The older woman reached for her Bible and then read aloud these words: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."

No doubt a great many who are not now Christians expect some day to accept God's salvation.

It is well to remember that only the present is ours. We cannot recall the yesterdays nor can we be sure of tomorrow. The only time which is ours for decision and action is now. "There is plenty of time" is a snare in which Satan has caught many a soul. One of the easiest things in the world is to put off indefinitely even in matters of vital importance. The wisdom and love of God plead with us to act in the living present. "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold now is the day of salvation." Life with its opportunities are very uncertain. "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." There is danger and death in delay.

"Why do you wait, dear brother,
Oh, why do you tarry so long?
Your Savior is waiting to give you
A place in His sanctified throng.
What do you hope, dear brother,
To gain by a further delay?
There's no one to save you but Jesus,
There's no other way but His way.

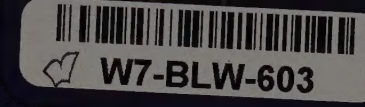
To delay is to trifle with God. The offers of grace are for the present. We have the promise: "Behold now is the day of salvation." We also have the warning: "The Holy Spirit saith, today if ye shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts." If a man were to act without seriousness in his dealings with the President of the United States, that would be regarded as audacity. What shall we say of a man who will trifle with Almighty God! If He deigns to knock at your door, do not delay. Open your heart to Him now. If you have been halting between two opinions, resolve *now*, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to take Him as your personal Savior. If you have

been neglecting the Church, decide *now* that you will do what you know to be your duty. If you have been trifling with some known sin, determine *now* with the help of God to amend your sinful life. Every time God knocks at your heart and you refuse to heed His summons, you make the door harder to open. Even if you should live twenty or forty years longer, if you continue to trifle with the Savior's offers of grace, your heart may become so hard that you will have no desire to admit Him later on. Do it now.

Jesus will never be closer to you than He is today. The story is told of a young cragsman who, while gathering sea-birds' eggs, let himself down by a rope, over the brow of a precipice to a ledge far below. As he stood on that ledge the rope slipped, and there it swung far out above the abyss. It swung towards him again. What is to be done? It is nearer now than it will ever be again. If he loses this chance, there is less hope for the next. He braced himself for the spring, then leaped and caught the rope and was swung up to safety.

Christ is the only rope between you and heaven. That rope is within your reach today. It will certainly never be nearer to you than it is now.

Now, dear reader, as I bring this message to you to a close, I am again praying that God will use it as a knock at your door. May it arouse you to a realization of the truth that Jesus is your one and only Savior. I pray that you may hear and heed His summons. The crucified Christ stands waiting now for your response. The knock is His and His is the promise. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me."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